The PULPIT

A Periodical of Contemporary Preaching

AUGUST 1949

Christ, the Builder of Men

By JAMES C. O'FLAHERTY

On Being Spiritually Prepared for Life

By WILLIAM H. HUDNUT, JR.

What May a Christian Believe About Conversion?

By ENSWORTH REISNER

Saved by Hope

By QUENTIN LEISHER

Keeping on Course

By ROBERT J. PLUMB

What Shall I Preach?

By FLOYD V. FILSON

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Charles Clayton Morrison, *Editor*

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In the September Issue

A sermon by ERNEST CADMAN COLWELL of the University of Chicago will be a feature of the next issue. Under the title "Our Faithless Life" he discusses the hollowness of much so-called religion today. On the university campus, he says, "faith is often barrenly intellectual."

CHARLES F. JACOBS, minister of the First Congregational Church, Waterloo, Iowa, will discuss "The Man Who Disturbed People. "He remains a disturbing presence in our contemporary culture, chiding us for our complacency in the presence of the giant agony of the world."

On the day when the Evangelical and Reformed Church again voted its approval of union with the Congregational Christian Churches, SAMUEL D. PRESS delivered before the assembly a forthright utterance on "Jesus Is Lord" in which he points out the church has a "single authority," Christ Jesus.

"Ideas versus Atoms" is a good theme for this new atomic world and its insistence that the Christian church must hold forth as dynamic an idea as the Communists have will be approved by our readers. This sermon is by NORMAN E. NYGAARD, minister of the Congregational Church, Lisbon, Ohio.

The head of the department of homiletics at McCormick Theological Seminary, GEORGE M. GIBSON, contributes a sermon on "The Liberating Truth" in which he shows that "Christian liberty is not an end in itself; it is a derivative of Christian truth."

The September issue will also present a practical article on "A Real Every-Member Canvass."

WHO'S WHO IN THIS ISSUE

While minister of the Normal Park Baptist Church, Chicago (1942-45), REV. JAMES C. O'FLAHERTY was president of the Chicago Baptist Ministers Conference. At the present time Mr. O'Flaherty is teaching in Wake Forest College, and is writing his thesis looking to a Ph.D. degree from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

For several years REV. WILLIAM H. HUDNUT, JR., was pastor at Glendale, Ohio, then went to First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Ill., the church once attended by President Lincoln. He now ministers at Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, N.Y.

REV. ENSWORTH REISNER has ministered at First Methodist Church, Milwaukee, Wis., since 1946. Earlier pastorates were Ford Methodist and Strathmoor Methodist churches in Detroit and Richmond Ave., Methodist Church, Buffalo. Mr. Reisner graduated from Wesleyan University in 1931, then attended Harvard Law School for two years. Following a brief period of practice in the Harvard Legal Aid, he attended Boston U. School of Theology and entered the ministry.

A graduate of Trinity College and the Virginia Theological Seminary, REV. ROBERT J. PLUMB was rector of Trinity Church, Branford, Conn., and since 1940 has led the activities of St. Mark's Church in Washington, D. C. During the war he served as chaplain in the U.S. Navy. He is associate editor of the *Southern Churchman*.

Both the father and mother of REV. QUENTIN LEISHER were ordained Baptist ministers. Following his studies at Whitworth College in Spokane, Wash., and at the Boston U. School of Theology, Mr. Leisher was pastor for four years in Spokane. He now ministers at the Congregational Church, Cohasset, Mass. As a young man just out of High School, Mr. Leisher was a musician with the U.S. Navy Band.

DR. FLOYD V. FILSON heads the department of New Testament at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago.

REV. H. RICHARD RASMUSSON is minister of the University Presbyterian Church (all-student) at Purdue University.

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE

The Event of the Month

CARDINAL SPELLMAN'S vituperative explosion over Congressman Barden's bill for federal aid to public schools has brought into the open an issue that has been kept underground for the past 30 years. In characterizing this bill as "anti-Catholic" and its author as an "apostle of bigotry," the cardinal virtually lays the Catholic cards on the table. No excuse is left for any Protestant or other American to doubt that the Roman Church is determined to get its hands into the public treasury for support of its parochial schools. The bill which passed the Senate two months ago would have recognized the Catholic claim for a portion of the federal fund. Mr. Barden's bill, H.R. 4643, is virtually identical with S. 246 except that it applies only to public (tax-supported) schools and provides a way to enjoin any attempt to divert this federal money to any other purpose. It was approved by the subcommittee by 10 to 3. Whether it will come to the floor of the House is yet uncertain. A bitter battle is ahead, we may be sure, in Congress and in public opinion. The Roman Church has a tremendous stake in its effort to break down the separation of church and state, and the stake of Protestantism in maintaining this principle cannot be exaggerated.

A Cardinal Explodes

The Book of the Month

GOD'S GRACE AND MAN'S HOPE. *By Daniel Day Williams. Harper, $2.75.*

LAST MONTH the book selected for this place of honor was Reinhold Niebuhr's challenging and powerful *Faith and History*. Both Niebuhr and Williams deal with the same problem: Is there ground for believing that evil and sin will ever be eliminated in history? Niebuhr says no, and looks "beyond history" for the fulfillment of the Christian hope. Williams also says no, but with radical reservation. He believes that in God's revelation in Jesus Christ a new power was released in history which created a new community, a fellowship of forgiveness and grace—in truth, a new history within history. In this new history there is progress, growth in grace, actual moral and spiritual attainment and possession. This new order of history is not discontinuous with the ongoing stream of temporal history, but is bound to it by the reign of Christ who is both the Head of the church and the Lord of history. Dr. Williams sets his view over against that of Dr. Niebuhr, who denies the possibility of redemption as an actual possession in time and affirms that we are saved only "in principle" while we wait for the consummation of our salvation "beyond history." Dr. Williams' book is by all odds the ablest critique of both liberalism and neo-orthodoxy that has yet appeared. I predict that this book will place its author within the small circle of the outstanding theologians of our time.

A Thought for the Month

OUR SOUL needs stopping places, stations, on the long road of its ascent. The public sanctuary where formal worship is held with weekly regularity does not supply all our needs. We need lesser sanctuaries here and there into which we may retire and let our soul catch up with itself and catch up with God. In the more leisurely society of the Middle Ages travelers found little shrines spaced along the roadway in which hung a crucifix and the image of a saint. Here the wayfarer could rest and pray and gather strength for his journey. In our age of swift movement we do not have these wayside shrines, yet every man may set them up for himself, if not upon the earthen roadway then upon the roadway of his routine habits. Of course, the Bible is such a shrine, and the mind may retire into its pages and come forth refreshed and reclad. A little book of devotion, compact of the wisdom of men and women who have lived near to God, is such a shrine. Its leaves are for our healing and its words cleanse our imagination. A fine friendship is a little sanctuary—how our faith and courage depend upon the faith and courage of others! And for most of us there is somewhere a grave which enshrines our love and hope. It is a sound instinct that prompts us to visit the little mound frequently, bringing fresh flowers in our hands. Where a soldier of England is buried, said Rupert Brooke, even on foreign soil, that little spot is forever England. Our Gettysburgs are our nation's sanctuaries, consecrated ground, as Lincoln said. A glen, a hilltop, a room, a corner of a city street, an anniversary, any point of time or place at which some memorable experience of sorrow, or affection, or achievement, or illumination once occurred, is a sanctuary where the abiding presence of God evermore waits to bless us again and again whenever we return.

Life's Lesser Sanctuaries

Charles Clayton Morrison

Christ, the Builder of Men

By JAMES C. O'FLAHERTY

Arise, shine, for thy light is come. Isaiah 60:1

THE MIND of Christ is not a rigid mold into which we are exhorted to pour our minds that they may thereby be cast in a fixed and brittle form for all eternity. The mind of Christ is rather the stimulater of the highest and best potentialities latent within us. Thus it happens that, whenever our minds are confronted by the mind of Christ something new and truly marvelous is born. Our highest possibilities are realized. A new life, or a new dimension of life, springs into existence. In this sense, the words of the poet-prophet taken from our scripture lesson may effectively express the challenge of Christ: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come."

As human beings, we stand in need of this call out of gross darkness into the light. We need to be called out of immaturity, ignorance and ineptitude, if we would achieve our best in any area. In no field of human endeavor have we observed achievement springing forth immediately into being, full-panoplied like Athena from the head of Zeus. For behind every great human being we have observed another human being with a like greatness in him. Behind a Plato stands a Socrates, and who can conceive of a Plato without his Socrates? Behind a Napoleon stand a Bourcet and a Baron du Teil, those eighteenth century masters of a new technique in the art of warfare, masters whose definitive influence Napoleon was quick to acknowledge. Behind the magnificent judicial mind of a John Marshall was the tremendous influence of a George Wythe. Behind the strange but fascinating art of a storyteller like Hans Christian Andersen was the effect produced on a youthful mind by a reading of the poet Shakespeare and the writer Stolberg. Scholars can multiply instance upon instance of this kind. For wherever human attainment shines forth, whether on a modest or a grandiose scale, we are certain, if we delve deeply enough, to find a creative influence in the background. Sometimes the pupil outstrips the master and sometimes the case is reversed. Sometimes a success is a questionable, or even an evil, success. But always there is the calling of deep unto deep. Always someone has spoken the decisive word: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come."

A MASTER OF MEN

Jesus Christ is the master of men's hearts and minds; he has, through twenty centuries, called forth the best in men. He was not primarily interested in the sparking of literary, scientific, military or any other variety of specific talent operating within the confines of a specific area. He was intent upon bigger game. His interest lay rather in striking that divine spark which helps men to be men. "In him," says the Gospel of John, "was life." And we might interpolate: not merely a part of life. "And the life was the light of men." As long as the whole remains greater than the parts, so long will he who speaks to the whole man be greater than he who speaks to the partial man. Christ knew what was in man. He knew the extent of our daily struggle to be merely human. And it was into this struggle that he preferred to throw himself, speaking the helpful word and performing the helpful deed. Christ was not merely interested in the best men. Rather was he interested in the best *in* men. Let us glance at the record of his achievement.

PETER TRANSFORMED BY CHRIST

The apostle Peter has long been the effective symbol of the Christian's religious development. And to him we can look for illustration of our theme that Christ is the builder of men. Perhaps the attractive power of the story of Peter lies in the fact that, after all, he was in the beginning a pretty average sort of fellow. He was an obscure fisherman on an obscure lake in an obscure part of the world. Left to his own devices, he would doubtless have lived a colorless and innocuous life, great in nothing, mediocre in heart and mind. Like countless multitudes before and since, he would have passed his obscure days working, rejoicing, sorrowing, eating, sleeping and procreating, all in due course.

But the remarkable fact is that this dim figure *did* turn his back upon his own mediocrity and *did* join in a high adventure, which, from his point of view, could not reasonably lead to that which seemed desirable, but which might very reasonably lead to that which seemed evil—to poverty, to persecution and very possibly to a painful death. Christ's call to him on that eventful day on the shore of the lake was a call from relative security into almost absolute insecurity. We of twentieth century America who worship at the shrine of social security ought to be able to understand any hesitation he might have had in following the Nazarene. But Peter, like Andrew, James, John and all the rest, took up the gauntlet which Jesus had flung down. In so doing, he turned his back on social security, on Galilean respectability, and on the prospect of a peaceful old age.

Now Peter must have known Peter. He must have had some inkling of his own weaknesses: namely, his lack of great intellect, his perennial desire for precipitate action, and his tendency to waver at a decisive

moment. Being certainly no fool, he must have known that he ran psychological, inward hazards in attempting to follow a leader like Jesus. He must have had dim forebodings of how he would behave in critical situations like that at Caeserea Philippi, when he tried to dissuade Jesus from the courageous, but dangerous journey to Jerusalem, and when he cravenly denied friendship with Jesus on the tragic night before Calvary. But despite all this there was something about Jesus which reassured him, something which assured him that, in the last reckoning, Peter would transcend Peter and measure up to the most rigorous demands of apostleship. When Christ called, Peter knew he could no longer remain in the gross darkness of his mediocrity. He had to come out into the light.

But Peter was not the only man whom Jesus made. There were countless others who were redeemed from all varieties of ignorance, superstition, sloth and sin. Above all, there was the apostle Paul, whose life, even more than Peter's, spells out a glorious page in the book of history. His life was an even mightier parable of the power of Christ to call men out of gross darkness into marvelous light. For what would the bigoted and cruel Pharisee by the name of Saul mean to modern man, had his highest and best potentialities not been evoked by the challenge of Christ? Twenty subsequent centuries record the names of many of those belonging to the glorious company of the apostles. And this glorious company of apostles praises Christ chiefly through the fact that they *became* the highest that it was in them to become.

THE NEED OF OUR TIME

That is all very well, you say. Most people will concede the point that Jesus was a marvelously successful leader of men and that the Christian did represent an advance spiritually and ethically over his contemporaries. Does it necessarily follow, however, that the Christian is the type of human being we need today? Or, to put it another way, can Christ render men fit to live with themselves and with one another in our own complex and frightening time? If you raise such a question, you raise a fair and even a necessary question, but fortunately one that can be answered with an emphatic affirmative.

The great need of our time is not technological, but moral. This is the studied opinion of those who are supposed to know. But on this point we do not need to consult the experts. We need only consult the daily newspapers, those highly accurate barometers of our moral climate. Emblazoned on the front page of almost every daily newspaper are sordid and alarming stories of man's inhumanity to man. Ax-murders, theft, embezzlement, rape, incest, race violence, class violence, and just plain everyday violence. Recently we have even read of cannibalism in western Europe. Twentieth century man, with his cup of sin overflowing, has utilized almost every mechanism and every technique of modern science and industry in the service of greed, lust and crime. Gunpowder, dynamite, the combustion engine, the steamship, the airplane, the submarine, the microscope and even the lowly hypodermic needle have been used in the service of man's inhumanity to man. Perhaps we now stand at the threshold of a new age of jet-propelled cruelty!

Even where a technique of modern science has not yet been utilized in the cause of domestic misery, as in the case of the uranium bomb, nation has had to bruise nation with it. Small wonder that one of the makers of the atomic bomb was forced to confess: "In some sort of crude sense, which no vulgarity, no humor, no overstatement can quite extinguish, the physicists have known sin, and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose." What is this sin but the physicist's former isolation and detachment from human affairs? But it is not alone the sin of the detached scientist. It is the cardinal sin of modern man, the sin implied in the question of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

But the comforting fact is that Christ is going on in his old work of creating men and women here and there who are fit to be their brothers' keepers. Let us consider two such types, one a genius and the other a less spectacular figure.

A CHRISTIAN HUMANITARIAN

William Wilberforce was an independently wealthy young Englishman of attractive personality with more love for gambling and the whimsicalities of gay society than for his university studies. Nevertheless, while still a very young man, he was elected to Parliament. During his early years as a public figure he continued his old ways, and his companions in London were the gayest to be found in a very gay society. But something happened to this young Parliamentarian, something which was to evoke his real genius. On a trip to Nice, France, with one of his old teachers, Dr. Isaac Milner, Wilberforce was converted to evangelical Christianity through his reading and through the persuasion of Dr. Milner. From the year 1784 onward, the mind of Christ was the mind of William Wilberforce, and from that year on the heart of Christ was the heart of William Wilberforce, as far as any follower of Christ has succeeded in emulating his spirit.

There now developed in Wilberforce a moral passion which in time was to make itself felt from the slave coasts of Africa to the plantations of North America. For out of his moral passion there grew a deep compassion for suffering humanity. The chief evil of his day was the slave trade. Against this monstrous evil, with all its reeking damnableness, this mild little man rose as if armed with the high hand and the stretched out arm of Almighty God himself, and smote the evil till it ceased from off the face of the earth. No longer would the hell-ships, whose holds were filled with bruised black bodies and broken hearts, ply the high seas. No longer could greedy slavers and callous skippers collaborate with plantation owners beyond the seas to traffic in the bodies of black men and women. For this once, at least, the British lion was made to roar in obedience to the voice of the gentle Galilean.

Can you not see the connection? Galilee—Nice—London; Christ—Wilberforce—the British Parlia-

ment. True it is, Wilberforce did not accomplish it alone. But without him the British Parliament would not have abolished the slave trade when it did. Let us devoutly thank God that Wilberforce's encounter with Christ was such as to change him from a darling of fashionable society into "the conscience of England" and of the world.

CHRIST'S SPIRIT IN TODAY'S LIFE

Wherever men take the part of their weaker brethren, whether these weaker brethren be the little children, the simple, the unlettered, the sick, the bruised, the captive, there the mind and the heart of Christ is present. Woe unto us if we abuse the little children, the simple, the unlettered, the bruised, the captive. It were better that a millstone were hanged about our necks and that we were drowned in the midst of the sea! But out of the gross darkness of our unconcern for our weaker brethren, Christ calls us into his marvelous light. An act need not be done officially in the name of organized Christianity to show forth the spirit of Christ. No one knows where and how the spirit of Christ will manifest itself in human relations, but we may rest assured that it will result in an expression of love.

Last August a young Connecticut housewife and her lawyer brother went to the rescue of a Russian woman imprisoned against her will in the Soviet consulate in New York city. They were utter strangers to the woman and she to them. But these young Americans had compassion on a suffering fellow human being simply because a fellow human being was suffering. Of such is the Kingdom of God. It would be fairly easy to demonstrate that organized Christianity had some hand in this particular affair. But the final cause for this concern of human being for human being is to be traced to a mind and a heart refashioned in the image of Christ.

Amid the welter of wrongdoing, frustration and distress which goes to make up our everyday world there is hope of better things to come. Man was not created for ignorance, superstition, bias, hatred, lust and greed. Rather was he created for light, for life and for love.

CHRIST AND YOUR LIFE

There is a remarkable early self-portrait of the artist Albrecht Dürer which bears a striking resemblance to Christ. This resemblance was intentional on the artist's part, but as a famous art critic has said, "it was not an act of sacrilege or arrogance," for "he had created his own image in the light of what he aspired to be." In the last resort, this is the vocation of all Christians, namely, to be conformed to the image of Christ. The self-portrait of Dürer portrays Dürer, but marvelously at the same time it portrays Christ. Our features are ours and at the same time they are Christ's. Christ does not do violence to those aspects of our nature which are ours by nature. He does not roll us off an assembly line or force us into a rigid stereotype. Neither you nor anyone else knows what Christ will do with your life. It will be, in him, a new creation. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." Your talents and your personal qualities will add a new luster to the glorious company of the apostles and the goodly fellowship of the prophets, if you but heed the call: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come."

A Pastoral Prayer

By H. RICHARD RASMUSSON

ETERNAL SPIRIT, truthful and holy, our hearts are contrite in this hour of worship. We have done those things which we ought not to have done. We have left undone so many things worthy to have been completed. Forgive us and renew a new spirit within us enabling us to be obedient to the best visions of each good day and hour and so growing into the likeness of Christ.

Take away from us our heart of stone, so often unresponsive to the saving experience of life, and give us a heart to love and adore Thee, a heart to delight in Thee, to follow and serve Thy will.

Lift up our faith. May it be a means of our laying hold on the great realities of our religion. Teach us that some things never can be true for us until we make them true. Teach us that knowledge comes not only through thinking but also through right living. Help us, O God of our lives, to be each day as good as we really are.

Revive our need for things that matter to the soul. Help us to go into the coming week with simplicity of spirit and earnestness of life. Teach us that the pearl of great price comes only to those who earnestly desire it. May we want a more abundant life. Except we become as little children we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

May we come to know in personal experience: "Lo I am with you always"; "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." May we want and get this everlasting life, here and now. Hear us because we pray in the Spirit of Christ our Savior. Amen.

On Being Spiritually Prepared for Life

By WILLIAM H. HUDNUT, JR.

UNLESS a man has Christian character he is actually unprepared for life in every other way, for a strong body and a trained mind amount to little without a disciplined spirit. They are as useless as an expensive watch that is not in time with the stars.

Unless we Christians are developing spiritual strength in the midst of all our multitudinous activities, unless we hold ourselves instantly available for the service of Christ, for witness and work on his behalf, our religion is hollow and we are neither ready nor able to cope with the trials of this age. Spiritual preparedness is a large order: it means the determination to conquer one's moods, it involves humility and purity of life, and it requires an abiding eagerness to testify to Christ by word and deed at any time and anywhere.

People who have been Christians all of their lives are apt to think that they are fully prepared spiritually when as a matter of soul-searching fact they often are not. Peter is a good example of the man who protests his spiritual readiness but who, when put to the test, does not come through with very shining colors. His life throws a penetrating light on this whole important matter of spiritual preparedness. Shortly before the crucifixion, when danger surrounded them all, he boasted to Jesus: "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death." But alas, he was not as ready as he thought; his confidence in himself had been misplaced.

I

For one thing, Peter was unprepared because he lacked humility. He kept thinking of himself too much; he got in his own way. He had never fully appreciated what Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Peter felt that the earth needed to be carried by storm. He was a boastful, blustering, hasty sort of fellow, an impetuous man of action. Whatever needed to be done he could do. Did Jesus need defending? Very well, he would defend him, and forthwith he rushed forward, rashly striking at the first man he met and cutting off his ear. Did Jesus need rebuking? Very well, he would take it upon himself to rebuke him, telling his Lord that he was quite mistaken about the sufferings ahead of him, that such things were far from him. Did a new and awe-inspiring experience such as the transfiguration confront him? Very well, instead of keeping silent when he did not know what to say he made the silly suggestion that they build three tabernacles on the top of the mountain. Did Jesus face suffering and probably crucifixion? Very well, Peter would be the first at his side: "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death."

But Peter was not ready; he was overconfident. He had come from a dispute with the other disciples as to which one should be accounted the greatest. He had been measuring himself by the standards of men and had failed to place himself under the judgment of God. No man who thus contends for personal power and prestige is prepared to follow him who humbled himself by washing his disciples' feet. No man who worries about his own position and preferment is equipped for adventure with him who let himself be abased that others might abound. Fresh from a contention involving pride of place, Peter, in his foolish, impulsive way, cried, "Lord, I am ready." But he was not ready; he was merely self-assured. Peter overrated himself; he needed more humility.

Jesus loved Peter, of that there can be no doubt. But his love did not blind him to Peter's need. "Simon, Simon," he said, "Satan hath desired you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail. And when you are converted, strengthen your brothers." Jesus knew that Simon had a long way to go before he could ever really become Peter. Tempestuous, impulsive, self-assertive and self-important, he had never come to terms with himself. He was his own worst enemy, flying off the handle instead of holding on. He was always putting his immediate, self-centered reactions in the way of good judgment. To quote Thoreau's fine remark, "As long as a man stands in his own way, everything seems to be in his way." To be sure, Peter had a warm and generous nature, and he was passionately loyal to his Master, but his estimate of himself was not yet accurate enough for the stability of character Christ required. "When you are turned around, away from yourself," said Jesus, realizing that Peter's perspective had not yet changed, "*then* strengthen your brethren. For the present you are not ready, only self-deceived; despite your protestations you will actually deny your Lord three times before the dawn. Know thyself, Peter."

A modest and accurate appraisal of one's self is essential to true courage. If we know what we can do, we will be less likely to undertake something utterly beyond our powers. Had Peter been humble enough to know the area of his greatest temptations, he would have realized that it lay, as it so often does, in the area of his greatest gifts, the realm of human relationships. Such a realization might have kept him from putting himself in that awkward position, during Jesus' trial, where people could spot him, point at him, suspect him, question him. His whole disposition, his indiscriminate cordiality, laid him open to temptation. "Surely you were with the Nazarene?" said a pretty maid; "don't

you know this Jesus from Galilee? You're from Galilee yourself, aren't you?" "Why, of course, you're one of his disciples; I saw you coming out of the garden with him." Poor Peter, standing by the fire in the courtyard, was caught in a web of his own making; and cursing, swearing and denying, he sought to make his way out. Slow-witted under fire, he could think of nothing better to do than to lie. And this was the man who, only a little while before, had insisted, "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death." Had he been more humble he would have been more ready, would have known himself more accurately. No one is spiritually prepared unless he has a true knowledge of his own shortcomings; humility always lies behind true strength of character.

II

A second fact to remember is that spiritual unpreparedness very often is due to sentimentality. Peter had never quite understood the tremendous reality of the situation; his outlook on life was naive. Once Jesus, trying to prepare his followers for the hard days to come, sought to impress upon them the gravity of the situation and the probability that he would be tortured and killed; Peter waived it indignantly aside, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." And this happened just after Peter had said to him, "Thou art the Christ," the longed-for Messiah, the Chosen One of God. Instead of reproving his Master, he should have realized that such a man would be bound to run foul of the authorities. But he was too sentimental to face harsh reality; he failed to see life as it was, and persisted in changing the facts to suit his fancies, which is the essence of the sentimental approach. Jesus was good; therefore, according to Peter, God would never allow him to suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, and killed. Such things could not, should not happen. But they did! Peter needed more of his Lord's realism.

When matters finally forced Peter to admit that what Jesus had said would happen actually was about to happen, he became sentimental again in an hour that called for the sternest reality, and said that if his Lord went to prison, he would; that if his Lord were killed, he would die too. Subsequent events, however, proved these assertions false. Peter lived on, unimprisoned and unharmed, after his Lord had been put to death. He had not been crucified with him, had not even been arrested with him. His bravery had turned to cowardice; the hero of the evening had become the craven of the dawn. Peter denied his Lord, yes, but he was first betrayed by his own sentimentalism. He had so dramatized himself that he had never really discovered himself.

This tendency to sentimentalize about a situation until we become remote from the reality of it is well illustrated by the experience of a friend of mine. He and a small party had climbed half way up Mt. Rainier to a point about as far as most amateurs go. The guides had taken them to the top of a steep ridge which ended in a long sheet of ice, and here they were supposed to engage in "nature coasting." The idea was to sit down, shoot over the ledge and slide far out on the hard crust. The descent seemed so precipitous that none dared try it. My friend's resistance to the pleas that he make the attempt was high, but when he saw a pretty girl eyeing him, his will power, like Peter's, vanished. Murmuring a brief prayer for his sins, he sat down, shut his eyes and took off. A few seconds later he found himself far out on the ice after a thrilling plunge. He had gone so far so fast that it took him twenty minutes to make his way back to the top of the hill. There all his efforts to inveigle the girl into following suit were vain; she was just too scared. On their return that afternoon they paused to look back, and the girl who had been afraid to do any nature coasting herself cried, "Look back up there; that's where we slid down!" Well, that is sentimentalism. She dramatized herself until she actually began to think of herself as a participant in a part she had not played. She saw herself as a performer when in fact she was only a spectator.

Now that is precisely what Peter did. He saw himself sharing a role he had not experienced; his imagination outstripped his volition. He sentimentally thought of himself as being imprisoned and put to death with Jesus, and no doubt he derived great comfort from his daydream. It was an affecting scene: the faithful disciple, the one whose name had been changed to "the rock," true to the last, faithful to the end, unable to save his Lord but nobly dying with him, accompanying him into the great unknown. Peter imagined it all vividly, it moved him deeply, and he honestly felt himself capable of it. But his whole approach was sentimental: he dramatized himself beyond what the realities of his life allowed; he professed his readiness as a fact when it was only a fancy; his desire outran his discipline. O Peter, how often we are like you, so like! "Lord, with thee I am ready to go both to prison and to death." Are we ready to say that, and mean it? Would you die rather than deny your Lord? That is a question that needs answering by every true Christian. Which is most real about us, our cowardice or our courage? "Lord, with Thee I am ready. . . . " Are we?

III

Finally, spiritual preparedness comes not only from genuine humility and deep realism but also, for the Christian, from a firm, true understanding of our Lord, and a basic commitment to his major purposes. Peter was very slow in gaining a true understanding of his Lord, and no Christian life is spiritually prepared without that. It is safe to say that not until Peter neared the end of his days did he really comprehend what his Master had set out to accomplish. His faith was twined around a false theory of the Messiah's career, a sort of Pollyanna theory in which the cross had no place. From the moment Jesus was arrested Peter's faith began to slip, so much so that he denied his Lord thrice before his death, and after it remarked with Cleopas that "we hoped that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel," showing that what

remained of his faith was largely a regret that he had been mistaken. Years later, even, his lack of deep understanding of his Lord was illustrated in his refusal to eat with Gentile Christians, and Paul had to rebuke him to his face. Often Peter seemed to lose his hold on the true spirit of his Master; he was never fully prepared to say, as he did say, "Even if I must die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Like so many of the rest of us, Peter was not ready; his understanding did not go deep enough; Peter was too easily, too quickly, discouraged. Peter had never learned to master his moods.

Do you remember the story of how God threatened to remove all of the temptations he had placed at Satan's disposal? Satan replied: "That is all right, go as far as you like—just so you leave me the weapon of discouragement. That is all I need to do my work." So it was with Peter, and so it has been with many a Christian since; discouragement has clouded our vision, produced disloyalty, and made us untrue to our Lord.

Peter's whole conception of discipleship was too shallow. He thought it very largely a matter of blowing on his hands, going forward and doing a job. He made the mistake of confusing good intentions with high results. He meant well, but he had never quite faced up to Christ in the depths of his own character. It was that inner failure which defeated him, far more than any outward circumstance. He reminds one of old Gerald O'Hara in *Gone With the Wind*:

> . . . There warn't nothin' that come to him *from the outside* that could lick him. He warn't scared of the English government when they wanted to hang him. When he come to this country and was pore, that didn't scare him a mite neither. He warn't scared to tackle this section when it was part wild and the Injuns had just been run out of it. He made a big plantation out of a wilderness. When the war come on and his money begun to go, he warn't scared to be pore again. And when the Yankees come through Tara and might of burnt him out or killed him, he warn't fazed a bit and he warn't licked neither. He just planted his front feet and stood his ground. That's why I say he had our good points. There ain't nothin' *from the outside* can lick any of us.
>
> But he had our failin's too, 'cause he could be licked from the inside. I mean to say that what the whole world couldn't do, his own heart could. All you all and me, too, are like him. We got the same weakness and failin'. There ain't nothin' that walks can lick us, any more than it could lick him, not Yankees nor Carpet-baggers nor hard times nor high taxes nor even downright starvation. But that weakness that's in our hearts can lick us in the time it takes to bat your eye.

That is Peter to the life. It was never so much the winds from without as the winds from within, the winds of self-will, self-love, self-deception, that discouraged him and occasionally blew him down. The weakness in his own heart was his worst enemy, and it persisted only because he failed to give that heart, every bit of it, to Christ.

But who are we to condescend to Peter? What of our own state of spiritual understanding, what of our availability to Christ? Are we giving our whole lives to him, day by day? Peter had many faults, as we have, but for all that he was far above us in devotion. Enthusiastic leader of men, spokesman for the disciples, weak to be sure but never wicked, timid at times but more often bold, he forsook all to follow Christ. Jesus loved him. Beyond Peter's weakness he saw strength; beyond his rash outspokenness he saw reticence and courage; beyond his vacillating, high-tempered, moody nature he saw stability, the shadow of a mighty rock in a weary land. This was the real Peter, without whose glowing and contagious faith the church could hardly have survived those first critical days.

Yes, Jesus loved him. Did he not first appear unto him after the resurrection? Did he not commission him to feed his sheep? He saved his deepest water for his strongest swimmer. Jesus saw beyond the child that Peter was to the man who, when it came to the ultimate test, became a pillar of the early church in Jerusalem, boldly spoke out in peril of death and astonished the rulers by his witness; the man who was imprisoned by Herod, kept on growing in grace until he could accept Paul's views on the admission of Gentiles, and labored throughout the ancient world for the glory of his Lord. Jesus saw the real Peter, "the rock," the man who had the strength to go on after repeated failure and base denial to win a spiritual victory in the face of tremendous odds. And I like to think that on a summer's day in Rome Peter, hanging head downward because he counted himself unworthy to be crucified as his Master was, whispered softly to an unseen Presence before he gave up the ghost: "Now I am ready, Lord, to go with thee to prison and to death."

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*Let Them Come**

By JEAN GARIS FLOOD

Do you see them laughing, running
Just to touch that spotless hem?
See the Good Man leaning over
Smiling down on them?

Children laughing in the sunlight,
Stumbling barefoot in the sand,
Feel His strong arms close around them,—
Hold His friendly hand.

Can you hear the kind words spoken
Over curly heads unbowed?
"Let them come to Me," He murmurs
To the restless crowd.

"Let them come"—still sounds that urging
Of the Good Man's holy voice.
Lord, may *all* Thy stumbling children
Listen, and rejoice.

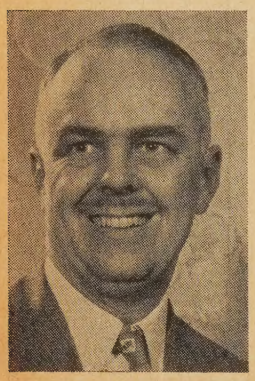
* Written after visiting The Children's Chapel in Washington Cathedral.

What May a Christian Believe About Conversion?

By ENSWORTH REISNER

Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. John 3:3.

THERE is an intriguing mystery that haunts every person. He wonders about that mystical experience called rebirth and wonders with a wistful yearning as of something mightily missed. There is a desire to be reborn which is as alluring to the spiritually sensitive as the desire of a loving husband and wife for the birth of a child. What is this mysterious experience called rebirth? What may a Christian believe about it that he may understand it and claim it as his own?



Perhaps an old Dutch fable may illuminate our inquiry. There were three tulip bulbs named, *No, Maybe* and *Yes*. They lived in the bottom of a bulb bin content to be round and fat, clothed in their silky brown garments until fall came around. They began to discuss the destiny of tulip bulbs. Said *No:* "I shall stay in my snug corner of the bin. That there is any other life for tulip bulbs I deny. I am content with things as they are." And he rolled over in the corner to sleep the winter away. Said *Maybe:* "There is something within me which I must achieve"; so he squeezed himself and squeezed himself and nothing happened until *Yes* said: "I have been told that we can do nothing of ourselves but only the good Lord will fulfill our destiny if we let ourselves be buried." Then one day a grimy hand reached down in the bin and groped for one tulip bulb. *Yes* gave himself to the hand and said, "Yes." Through the long winter months *No* and *Maybe* withered, and *Yes* was buried as if dead, but when spring came and the good Lord said "Yes," with all the richness of his nature, *Yes* burst forth in abundant radiance while *No* and *Maybe* still withered in the bin.

THE FACT OF CONVERSION

There are times in the lives of each one of us when we seriously doubt the existence of the experience of rebirth or conversion. We say "No" to our destiny. Still it is a well-authenticated fact, accepted by even the most cold-blooded scientists of mental phenomena, that human personality may be flowing all in one direction seemingly motivated only by baser urges and then of a sudden seem to reverse itself. It becomes reintegrated by a set of purposes far nobler than were seemingly present before. There have been a number of learned studies written on this subject, which is called "The Psychology of Conversion." Though you may or may not believe in the Christian interpretation of conversion, still there is an inescapable body of evidence that proves beyond the question of a doubt the actual existence of what we Christians call rebirth.

Most of us have either personally known or heard of striking examples of worthless drunkards unable to help themselves who turn to a power beyond themselves and become a model citizen. We have a national organization of these reborn individuals which is called "Alcoholics Anonymous." If we have studied the lives of the moral and religious statesmen of history who helped save nations from decay, we learn of many who lived worthless lives until they were converted, from which time on they became the saviors of their generation. No less figure than the historian Lecky wrote that England was saved the horrors of the French Revolution by the conversion of John Wesley in Aldersgate in 1728.

Perhaps our hesitancy over conversion is due to the fact that we do not recognize it in its less spectacular forms. Were I free to tell the stories of hundreds of people whose conversions I have witnessed, even their intimate friends would be astounded. Most of these stories should never be told because they are sacred and personal. Other turnings have been so gradual and slow as to be imperceptible, but nonetheless powerful and real.

THE STRONGEST PROOF

But even the declarations of science, the testimony of history, the personal witnessing of saved souls are not the strongest proofs of the existence of conversion and rebirth. The strongest proof of your possible spiritual birth is the unsatisfied hunger of your own soul for something it has not yet found. You can argue everything else out of existence but even in your most vehement argument you are only affirming your own soul hunger. If you persist in saying "No" to the birth of the spirit, your spirit will wither in a dark corner of fleshly existence. Don't be the tulip named *No*.

The fair-minded man is eventually compelled to agree that there is such a thing as rebirth, conversion, and that he desires it for himself. A brilliant graduate student of a theological school came one day to one of the older professors. He said: "I am convinced that many people have need of the conversion experience of rebirth and I would like to have it myself, but how do you do it?" The old professor looked at him and said: "You don't. *You* don't do it. *God* does it." The student shook his head and walked away sadly. There are many people who desire rebirth who have earnestly tried for this experience but have failed because they, like the tulip *Maybe,* have tried to squeeze it out of

themselves, but fail and end up saying "Maybe." Conversion is not a personal achievement. It is a free gift of God. Many people miss the conversion experience because their pride and self-reliance refuse to consent to the idea that God can do something personally for them that they cannot do for themselves. They refuse to admit that they are poor sinners in need of salvation. Instead, with questionable modesty, they say secretly in their own heart: "I guess I'm not so bad after all. Maybe conversion is a good thing, but *just maybe.*"

THE CASE OF NICODEMUS

In the Gospel of John there is a plaintive story of one of Israel's finest citizens. He was a man of wealth and position and a scholar of great note with a deep integrity. He was fair-minded enough to see that the traveling teacher, Jesus, must have come from God and he frankly said so, but he wouldn't commit himself to stand with Jesus. Instead he came by night so that none would see him. To him Jesus said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." But the master of Israel quibbled, saying: "How can a man be born again when he is old? Maybe all you say is true, but how?" Obviously Jesus was referring to being born of the spirit of God. And how? Well, Jesus explained, saying: "You don't know where the wind comes from or where it goes to; and so it is of the spirit. We do not know the how of many things but nevertheless we accept them. You," said Jesus, "are a master of Israel, and still you doubt the very things that you see and know to be true on earth. How can I tell you about heavenly things if you insist on doubting well-authenticated earthly things?"

In my mind's eye I can imagine the master of Israel, Nicodemus, walking away still hungering after the things of the spirit, mumbling to himself, "Maybe." Those who have not the audacious daring to accept the facts so well authenticated that God can give to them a conversion, a rebirth, will wither away as surely as those who reject the fact of conversion completely. They are like the tulip bulb who said, "Maybe" and rolled over in the corner.

'NOT QUITE READY'

Still the story goes that Nicodemus did not always say "Maybe," and that later on he said "Yes." I think many of us find ourselves in such a position. In our timidity and apprehension over this idea of rebirth we are not quite ready to say "Yes." The gestation period of our spiritual life has not yet brought us to the point of labor so we still ask the question, "How does one come into the experience of rebirth?" Jesus expressed it very simply when he said: "Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone. But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." The child in the womb must die to the life of the womb or it can never be born to the life of the flesh. A man of flesh must die to the life of the flesh or he can never come into the life of the spirit. That does not mean that either the seed, or the infant, or the free spirit destroys all that is found in the seed, or the womb, or the life of the flesh. It rather fulfills the highest promise of the former life when it is reborn into a newer life.

But when one is born into a newer life one must give up much of the former life. Indeed, such denial of self is the first prerequisite of all growth. Dr. Spock, the famous child specialist, explained the childish propensity of avoiding cracks in the sidewalk or slapping every third fence post as an evidence of the process of self-discipline. The child denies himself the privilege of doing certain things that he may be born into adult life. In sports the discipline of teamwork demands self-denial. The half-back dares not quit when the end is offside while he makes his touchdown run. He denies himself, goes back and does it over again that the life of the team may be born. So it is that in things of the spirit; when irritation and resentment threaten the citadel of our peace of mind, we dare not allow ourselves the luxury of being so sensitive that we hold bitterness. Instead we must deny ourselves, forgive and maintain silent patience if the life of the spirit is to be. The life of the tulip is so. The life of the spirit is so. To say "Yes" to God you may have to say "No" to self.

WHEN VICTORY COMES

You say it is still not clear to you? Perhaps not, my friend, but the time will come when you must answer either "Yes," "No" or "Maybe." I hope it is "Yes." There will be some issue, some decision to be made and then you will be brought face to face with the opportunity of rebirth.

Not long ago, in a private conversation with a younger business man of this city, I thought to myself: "My, how he has grown in stature, morally and spiritually." He has advanced in the business world and his spiritual and moral strength has become acknowledged by a great many people. Yet only a few years ago he was more or less on the edge of the church debating whether or not he should leave the church entirely. Then he had to make a decision as to whether or not he should leave a business which he considered as of questionable though legal character. Should he leave it he would undoubtedly lose a large potential income. Should he not leave it his relationship with God might be in question. He made the decision and it was "Yes." Yes, God's way would be his way. He said, as we sat there talking about the conversion experience of rebirth, "I never realized that I could tell the day and the hour, but I can."

Yes, indeed, you can when you say, "Yes." You can let God take over your life and die to self, and then you will experience the rebirth that brings forth the glorious bloom of the life of the spirit.

TODAY is your day and mine, the only day we have, the day in which we play our part. What our part may signify in the great whole we may not understand; but we are here to play it, and now is our time. This we know: it is a part of action, not of whining. It is a part of love, not of cynicism. It is for us to express love in terms of human helpfulness.

DAVID STARR JORDAN.

Saved by Hope

By QUENTIN LEISHER

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? Romans 8:24.

THERE was a time in the history of France when she turned her back upon God and wrote over the cemetery gates the epitaph of her spiritual bankruptcy: "He who enters here, leaves all hope behind." If the inscription had any power to carry out its proclamation, if it had any power to take away the hope and promise of immortal life, then, as the apostle Paul said, "of all men we would be most miserable." As the bard of old wrote, life would become "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, and signifying nothing."

Whenever hope is destroyed, life becomes meaningless. We are creatures who live by hope, and fortunate are we that it stands the storms and gales of life. Emily Dickinson expressed the enduring quality of hope in beautiful poetic style:

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard,
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

As we pass from crises to crises in this earthly life, we become increasingly aware of the durability of that celestial spark called hope.

A BLIGHTED CENTURY

Bernard Shaw gives us a good illustration of the everlasting and eternal hope within the human heart. In his play, "Too True to Be Good," written just before the outbreak of the Second World War, one of Shaw's characters exclaims: "I stand midway between youth and age like a man who has missed his train: too late for the last and too early for the next. I have no Bible, no creed: the war has shot both out of my hands. . . . I am ignorant: I have lost my nerve and am intimidated: all I know is that I must find the way of life, for myself or all of us, or we shall surely perish." That is a violent expression of a man who is in the sea of despair but who is still groping in the darkness to find the light and the way.

There have been many events in this twentieth century which have tended to blight the hopes of humanity. A "war to end wars" left a disillusioned people who turned away from the reality of building a "One World" order to anything that might take their minds off the matter. The historians call those days "The Roaring Twenties." The depression of the 1930's and the Second World War of the 1940's have added to the sense of futility and despair.

We look out upon a world in which fifty million men, women and children have been killed in the last decade as a direct and indirect result of war. The same decade has seen 586 billions of dollars of property reduced to rubble. Many thoughtful people are questioning whether or not there is much resemblance between this war-torn world and the world as God had intended it. Such people probably feel that Markham's description of "The Man with the Hoe" describes the world situation today: "Is this the thing the Lord God made?"

FALSE PHILOSOPHIES

It may be that we have placed our hopes in false philosophies and concepts so that we are skeptical and critical of any philosophy offering an adequate foundation for the future. Late in the 19th century men were living in what the historians have called the "gilded era." They became smug, arrogant and highly self-sufficient. They were basing all their hopes on a materialistic philosophy. There was a false security in which man felt that God needed him a lot more than he needed God. It was a part of that materialistic faith that science was sufficient for our faith and was all the savior we needed; but from the time the first atom bomb was released until this day, the scientists have turned preachers.

Sikorsky, aeronautical scientist, said: "The Godless man cannot develop into a superman. He may develop into a super-beast, and as such he will inevitably exterminate himself." A little before Sikorsky made that statement, the director of the Yale Sheffield Scientific School said: "to many thoughtful minds, the gains of science are secondary and superficial."

It is only fair to the scientists to say that the gains which they have made need not be superficial. We need modern medicine; we also need the progress that the inventor has brought to pass. Perhaps we might go further and say that we need a certain sense of materialism; but we have made a mistake in placing our faith and our salvation in materialistic philosophy. We need an ethical and moral foundation for our lives—we need to strengthen the spiritual foundations; then, the advances of science will not be superficial for there will be the spiritual power controlling the uses of new scientific achievements.

MILITARISM AND SECULAR EDUCATION

Just as materialism has been a false hope and thus a false savior, so militarism has been proved a false hope. I was a member of the armed forces in Pearl Harbor in 1940. We had so many ships and men at the "crossroads of the Pacific" that we were confident of the impossibility of attack, but something went wrong. It took months to rebuild the lost power. The lost lives will never be recovered. It is necessary that this country have protection and that all small countries have protection against those nations that commit acts of aggression, but the world cannot and will not be saved by force. This, too, is a false hope.

The third basis of hope that has been proved false is that the popular conception of secular education will save the world. The mere accumulation of facts, without an ethical, philosophical interpretation, will not save man from futility and despair. Solomon, the sage of sages, said: "Get knowledge; but with all thy getting, get understanding."

E. C. Lindeman, noted educator, declares: "Slowly and painfully we are being driven to acknowledge the stern truth that the enduring goal of life is moral striving. When this is again realized, we shall have no difficulty in asserting that morality is also the enduring goal of education."

We believe in a thorough preparation of the individual, but we must also admit that an individual's education may be used to pursue unethical goals. Certainly Voltaire and Hume will be counted among the great intellects of all time; however, one must realize that their emphasis on secular education did little to save the world from futility and despair. One of the last things David Hume's mother said was this: "David, you have snatched away the last crutch on which I had to lean—my faith in God." When the development of the intellect is separated from ethical and religious teachings, there is little basis for hope.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZED CHURCH

If it were correct to conclude that the institutionalized church has been sufficient to meet these problems and these philosophies, we would shower ourselves with honor and glory; however, we would be incorrect in drawing such a conclusion. The church was here through the "gilded era." It was here in the "Roaring Twenties"; and it was here through the world wars; nevertheless, the institutionalized church offers little basis for hope because it has failed to prevent the development of false hopes and philosophies and has failed to prevent the global wars that have been fought.

The false hopes to which we have clung and the wars that have been fought merely condemn the world, including the institutionalized church, as not having lived up to the high principles and teachings of our Lord and Master. Institutionalized Christianity has not always chosen the life of the spirit. Its members live in a world where they are molded, not only by Christianity, but by conflicting philosophies and ideologies as well.

We can no longer base our hopes in power, might or material wealth. These things cannot save us from futility, despair or destruction. The apostle Paul says that we are saved by hope—not hope in the things which we see, but hope in the things which are not seen. In other words, salvation for ourselves and for the world is through the spirit and the faith deep within our souls. This spark must be fanned into a fire so that we shall seek God's will and guidance in all the affairs of life, and his love and forgiveness.

MAN'S INNER FAITH

James B. Conant, president of Harvard University, has something interesting to say about this inner faith of man. Says Dr. Conant:

". . . whether a man lives or dies in vain can never be measured by the collective activity of his fellows, never by the fruits of war or peace. It can be measured only by the way he faces his own problems, by the success of failure of the inner conflict within his soul, And this no one may know save God.

"As a man views the past record of the human race and grapples with his own problems, as he strives to find the good and combat the evil, as he gains spiritual strength one day and loses it another, as he drives forward with all his power yet realizing his inadequacies, he must say with Job: 'Though He slay me yet will I trust Him.' "

The president of Harvard has stated the kind of faith and spiritual strength that offers hope to mankind. When that kind of faith and spirit begins to radiate from Christian personalities, there will come new power into the institutionalized church.

RADIANT CHRISTIANITY

In the book, *Madame Curie,* there is an illustration of what Christian people should be in this world if the world is to be made better and if the church is to offer an adequate basis of hope. Several months before radium was discovered, Pierre Curie told his wife that he hoped the element they discovered would have a pretty color. One evening when he returned home from the university, Pierre's wife told him that the element had something better than a beautiful color. They went out to the shed and Madame Curie said: "Look, Pierre, it has a glimmering radiance all its own, and seeks to make the jars, the wall and even your old coat reflect its uncanny splendor. It is radium, Pierre, seeking to make everything else, life itself, reflect light and influence."

That suggests what the church should be—a power that will reflect the living glory of God; a power that would supersede creeds, doctrines, denominations and all that separates and divides us one from the other. The church would then become a powerful force in combating bigotry, racial hatreds, war and intolerance. It would seek to make everything else radiate its light and glory.

When we base our hopes for ourselves and for the world in that kind of spiritual power, we are saved by hope. We are saved from a sense of futility and despair. This hope springs from our faith in the eternal God.

Keeping on Course

By ROBERT JOHNSTON PLUMB

A GROUP of soldiers were crowded on the foredeck of a transport which was six days out of New York enroute to the European theater of operations during the Second World War. One of them was whittling a curiously shaped figure out of a cigar box top. He was fashioning a crude sextant and when it was completed he took the angle of the mid-day sun and then began consulting a dilapidated pamphlet. After figuring for some time on the back of an envelope with the nub of a pencil salvaged from a "Buddy study Bible kit," he unfolded a map of the Atlantic ocean and set down on it the ship's position—slightly north and west of the Azores.

The ship's navigator, who had watched the procedure with interest from the bridge, climbed down the ladders to the main deck and asked the soldier the ship's position. To his amazement it proved to be very close to his own.

Navigation is defined as the art of determining a ship's or airplane's position and of conducting it from a departure point to a destination. The path between these points is known as the course and every available scientific aid is employed to keep on this course.

There are three general types of navigation and in the order of their development they are Piloting, Dead Reckoning and Celestial Navigation.

Since all of us are somewhere on that journey whose point of departure was our birth and whose destination is marked by the experience of death, since like Bunyan's Christian we are journeying through the wilderness of this world from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City which lies beyond the Delectable Mountains, we need to employ every known aid for keeping on course, for living as God would have us to live.

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First of all, there is the method of "piloting" which long ago was the only method of navigation. The Phoenicians and the Carthaginians felt their way along the coast from point to point, seldom ever sailing out of sight of land. Their pilots knew the coastal contours and depended upon familiar landmarks to guide them to the havens where they would be. When St. Paul was taken to Rome to appear before Caesar, his ship crept along the coast of the Island of Crete trying to reach Phoenix for winter quarters.

This dependence upon familiar landmarks limits one's course to sight of land. There is little of venture in it and great oceans and deep waters cannot be traversed by those who depend upon it. This method of navigation is useless in time of storm when rain, snow, sleet or fog blot out the coastline. It is distinctly a fair weather method. It is like the faith of many of us. As long as we can see all the familiar landmarks, as long as we can hear the sounds and see the sights of the Holy City, we are content.

It was not particularly difficult to be a disciple of Jesus during the first part of his earthly ministry. Men called him Rabbi. He read the lesson in the synagogue and he taught in the court of the temple. He was popular because he spoke as one having authority and not as the scribes. He attracted a great following. But when he refused to take up the sword in their political strife against the Roman government; when he claimed to be the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God; when he went through the deep waters of Gethsemane and stood before the high priest to cry, "Ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God and coming with the clouds of heaven"; when he stood before Pilate and said, "Yes, I am a king. To this end have I been born and to this end am I come into the world"—when these things came to pass, they left him and fled. They stuck close to the familiar shores.

What is the good of the kind of faith that depends for its existence only upon the familiar? What can it achieve when all that it depends on is blotted out in times of storm and stress? Too long have we followed Jesus only through the first part of his ministry and have fled from the cross. The church of the living God must never be allowed to become an established, quiet, respectable organization identified with all the polite hallmarks of secular society! The church of the living God must never be content with the preaching of popular platitudes to pious people! For the time has come for us to leave the coastline of our low-vaulted ecclesiastical past with its narrow denominationalisms and its selfish pride in the validity of its orders. The time has come for us eagerly to grasp the hand of our brother Church of South India in full recognition; not as an interesting experiment in church unity but as a most worthy part of the church of the living God!

II

We are not going to get very far along our course unless we use a more adequate method than that of piloting, which would bind us to the familiar and keep us from traversing great spaces. The second type of navigation is known as "dead reckoning." Here the navigator keeps a careful record of direction, speed, the time of traveling, wind velocity and great ocean currents. Theoretically he can compute his position at all times. Adverse weather conditions make a certain amount of dead reckoning necessary on every long

voyage, but it would be disastrous to depend upon this method alone. For the time will come when the farther shore will be reached and the channel must be found. Then all of the inaccuracies of human frailty will be revealed. There are many of us who would use only this method, who would make life's voyage entirely on our own, trusting in our self-sufficiency and believing that we have power of ourselves to help ourselves.

There was Jacob long ago setting out on a lonely journey; a strong young man, shrewd, self-sufficient, and yet he dreamed of a ladder between heaven and earth with the angels of God descending and ascending on it. There was Naaman the leper, brilliant captain of the Syrian host, setting out to visit the prophet Elisha, self-confident, trusting in his own resources only to find that they profited him nothing. There was the Prodigal Son saying "Gimme" to his father, knowing the score later to find his life meaningless in the far country.

III

Dead reckoning has a way of running out. It is helpful and it is necessary, but it is not going to get us to our destination. Something more adequate is needed, and we find it in "celestial navigation."

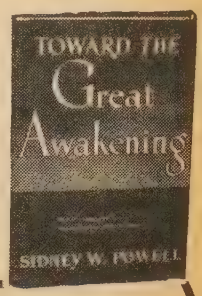
Here the ship's position is found by observing the sun, the moon, the planets or the stars. A sextant is used to measure the angle of one of the heavenly bodies. Then carefully prepared charts are consulted to find the latitude and longitude that this sun or star makes exactly at that angle at that date and time. That's something you can be sure of. There is order in God's design. There is order in his universe. You can count on the swing of the stars. Just as the fastest flying supersonic jet-propelled plane cannot be lost in the stratosphere as long as there are suns and moons and stars to tie to, neither need human beings ever be lost in the mazes of present perplexities as long as God rules.

No ship would leave its harbor, no plane its airbase, without sextants, charts and prepared tables. How careless are we on life's voyage about these things! Millions of dollars for secular education and very little for religious education! Compulsory secular education, haphazard religious education! Reading the stock ticker a must, reading the Bible a luxury!

We must not be content with clinging to the familiar. Nor are we self-sufficient for the journey. Like the soldier on the transport we must "shoot the sun," for "God is faithful who will not allow you to be tried beyond your endurance but will with the trial make a way of escape that you may be able to endure it."

THE CHURCH has done its job, and does it increasingly well, in serving humans who face the problems of birth and death and sickness and sorrow, who struggle with their children and their family relations and worry of the daily troubles of existence. But in meeting the problems laymen face in responsible leadership of their communities in business and politics and labor and agriculture, the church has missed the boat entirely. CHARLES P. TAFT.

To Help YOU *Accent* Evangelism



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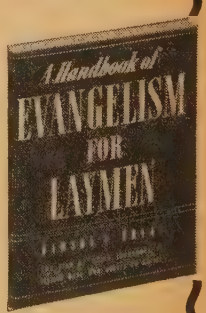

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Unpublished Sermons

EDWARD H. ROBERTS, Dean of Princeton Theological Seminary, preached a timely sermon at the Chicago Sunday Evening Club, his topic "Lessons of History." He based his discussion on the saying of Dr. Charles A. Beard—that he could summarize the lessons of history in four sentences.

History as Teacher

I. "Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad with power." The idea of Solomon, that "Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall." The great Nebuchadnezar, conqueror of his world, suddenly became insane and fell lower than his least subject. Napoleon, continental despot, held in his power almost all Europe and predicted that "in less than two months Russia will be suing for peace." But Russia was his nemesis and back he went to the west and to exile. "Pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes," said Ruskin. And said Jesus: "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased." The first lesson of history is—be humble.

II. "Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." For years there flourished in America a crime syndicate, which journalists dubbed "Murder, Inc." For nine years it cursed the nation, then came nemesis. As Anne of Austria said, "God does not pay at the end of every week, but he pays." The infamous Boss Pendergast held the Kansas City area in his grasp controlling the elections, the police and judges. But came his fall and prison. The world has never known a more piercing cry than that of David, who repented of his great wrongs. He repented, but his punishment continued in the horrible things that came to his family, rising to a peak in the tragedy of Absalom. The second lesson of history is—be holy.

III. "The bee fertilizes the flower it robs." In other words, the God of nature makes good come out of evil. And he does the same in the realm of the spirit. One of the best men in Christian history was Stephen. One day as he was preaching Christ, some in the audience became enraged and he was brutally slain with stones—and his garments were laid at the feet of young Saul. That tragic event was one of the means of bringing into the service of the church one of its most remarkable leaders. The thousands of martyrs of early days have proved indeed "the seed of the church." That principle holds good in every realm—"no pains, no gains." Charles Dickens knew suffering as a child; poverty and debt were a part of his home life. So he became a great champion of reform in the treatment of children and in factory betterment. Said Phillips Brooks: "Every step of progress the world has made has been made from scaffold to scaffold, and from stake to stake." The third lesson of history is—be hardy.

IV. "When it is dark enough you can see the stars." During the London bombings, the people were awakened to the courage and sacrificial spirit of their fellows. A new sympathy was born. At the height of the bombings, the *British Weekly* said: "How precious the church has become to us in the hot pursuit of these times! And how real the Scriptures where we find men experiencing the same darkness as are we and discovering the same light as have we!" In the case of the prophet Isaiah, all went well for years, then came the enemy—and darkness. Wrote the prophet: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the lord." The fourth lesson of history is—be hopeful.

God has blessed America and its people, but we must not forget that our greatest blessing is Christ and his gospel. And we must know that winning the world for him is not a hopeless task. "In this dark hour of the world's history, let us follow the gleam of the bright and morning star which God has so graciously placed in the firmament of our lives."

The Fact of Religion

TAKING as his text II Peter 1:16, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables . . . but were eyewitnesses of his majesty," J. R. BROKHOFF, minister of the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, Atlanta, Ga., preached a sermon on the theme, "Religion—Fact or Fiction?" He asks, could we be building our faith on a person who never lived? Communists, atheists, cynics say yes. Thomas thought Jesus' resurrection was an idle tale until he put his hand into his wounded side; then he declared, "My Lord and my God."

If you were asked concerning the reality of religion, how would you answer? On what facts would you base your statement that it is a fact? Here are three:

I. God is a fact. Nature reveals him: the heavens, mountains, sunrise, "the perfection of a lily" declare him Creator. Another evidence: life falls to pieces when God is left out. A satisfactory life cannot be built on agnosticism. Eternity cannot be faced confidently if God is an "If." Society could not go on without God. No one wants to live in a community without a church. Furthermore, a nation without God cannot succeed, as Hitler's Germany revealed.

II. Jesus is a fact. His historical existence is doubted by no reasonable person. The story of his life seems realistic and genuine. That he rose from the dead—the greatest fact about him—is evidenced by the impact of that event in the lives of his followers through twenty centuries. St. Francis, Luther, Schweitzer are evidences that Christ lives. Christians know he lives because he lives in their lives.

III. The Holy Spirit is a fact. The church, born of the Spirit, lives on though empires fall. The Christian religion, through the church, is responsible directly or indirectly, for every good movement and institution in the world today.

In view of the fact that Christianity is a historical reality, today's greatest tragedy is that Christians treat their religion as if it were fiction. They do not have convictions as their fathers did, only opinions. Consider these facts about church members: 20 per cent never pray; 25 per cent seldom read the Bible; 30 per cent seldom attend church services; 40 per cent do not give; 75 per cent refrain from church activities; 90 per cent have no family worship; 95 per cent make no effort to win others to Christ.

In 1948, in the United Lutheran Church, the average gain per congregation was two adults; the average contribution was $29. "Here is a concrete evidence that Christians consider their religon as a nice, sweet story without reality."

God gave the Christian religion to save the world from destruction. We Christians have the religion that can save. Or is it too late? Yes, the time is dangerously late! And Christians should be concerned about this. "God is still giving us Christians a final chance to establish his true religion for the salvation of the world. In that fact lies our opportunity for today and our hope for a better world tomorrow."

The Sixth Beatitude

FROM the beginning of time man has speculated in regard to God and wondered what God was like and how one could see him. Even savages are stirred at the thought of finding God in the wild nature about them. So FRANK A. COURT, of St. Paul Methodist Church, Lincoln, Neb., in his sermon on the sixth beatitude, "Eyes That See," is discussing a subject near to the interest of humanity.

In this beatitude Jesus indicates first, that what we see depends upon our character. One must be "pure in heart" to see God. Moffatt translates: "Blessed is the individual who is not double-minded, for he shall immediately be ushered into the intimacies of God." Hitler and Schweitzer were born very close together geographically, but how far apart they were as to what they saw! Hitler was not single-minded; Schweitzer was; and the latter came to think of life and God with reverence. What you see depends upon your character. Moreover, if you are to see God you must know what you are looking for. Job did not know; he said, "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" God is a Spirit. We have not advanced far beyond Jesus' definition of God: "God is a Spirit and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Jesus intimates that to see God we must see him in the spirit of life. Nobody has ever seen life. But we know that there is a spirit if life when from the winter's cold comes a new birth in flowers and forests.

We also know that if God is Spirit, then he is everywhere. "Though I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth even there shall thy right hand hold me."

Some may object to thinking of God in terms of Spirit; they would rather think of him as a "thought-process," or in some impersonal way. But the highest we know is personality, so we are right in thinking of God as the Spirit of life, intelligence, beauty, love—the Spirit which pervades all of life for those who through the purity of their thoughts are able to see him.

Secondly, we find God as we approach him through our minds. As we use our intelligence the God we see grows in stature. We begin with a God who walked with Abraham in the cool of the evening. Then there is the God of Isaiah, "high and lifted up"; the God of Hosea, who suffers with man; the God of Amos, a stern Being who demands justice. Finally, there is the God of Jesus, a Father-God, and our whole being is caught up into the thought of God as our Father. We come to know the true God through using our minds.

Third, we find God through our emotions—through love, through creative worship. "As we approach God in the silence, and are expectant, it is not so much that we find God as that he in turn finds us, and we come back and know that Jesus was right when he said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.'"

IF GOD has called you to be a missionary, I'd hate to see you shrivel down to be a king!

C. H. SPURGEON.

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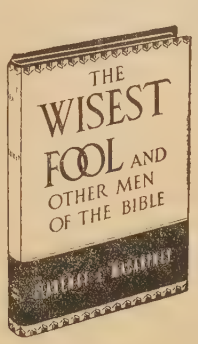

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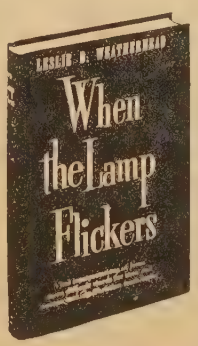

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Sermon Illustrations

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Ambassador at Large

THE valedictorian of one of the early classes in Princeton at which Woodrow Wilson was presiding during graduation was a young man looking forward to the Christian ministry —Frank Laubaugh. It was evident from the young man's commencement address that he held a deep passion for peace among the nations. His thesis was a concrete plan for a lasting peace. He spoke of "a parliament of nations; a brotherhood of man." Woodrow Wilson was intensely interested in what this young graduate was saying. Years intervened, and still that phrase rang in Wilson's mind—"a parliament of nations; a brotherhood of man." As President of the United States on a peace mission to Paris, Woodrow Wilson still repeated that phrase; he incorporated it into some of his official documents. But those words would long since have come to be little more than a cherished ideal were it not for the continued efforts of the young man who coined them. In Paris, at Flushing Meadows, N. Y., wherever the United Nations is in session wrestling with ths problem of peace, still you will find Frank Laubaugh in the vicinity, not as official delegate but there to assemble Christian people in services of prayer for the dawn of universal peace—an ambassador of God still pressing his long cherished desire for "a parliament of nations; a brotherhood of man."—*Homer W. Henderson, Vailsburg Methodist Church, Newark, N. J.*

Nothing New—Despair

WE ARE living in a day when fears, hates, prejudices, inhumanity prevail, when nerves are taut and minds are breaking, when we cannot talk without screaming, when the thin veneer of our civilization seems ready to split and the raw grain of our animalism splinter through. Dorothy Thompson quotes an American authority on atomic fission as saying: "Time is running against us, but what is running faster is the disintegration of our country, economically and spiritually." And Dr. Einstein, with somewhat more hope, declares: "We scientists believe that what we and our fellow men do or fail to do in the next few years will determine the fate of our civilization."

But the uncertainty and despair of our age are nothing new. Seventeen hundred years ago the historian Cyprian wrote to Donatus: "It is a bad world, an incredibly bad world, with its philosophy of materialism and force, determinism and moral despair. So many kinds of voices are in the world." And in 1849 the statesman Disraeli wrote: "In industry, commerce and agriculture there is no hope." Three years later the Duke of Wellington declared: "I thank God I shall be spared from seeing the consummation of ruin that is gathering about us."—*Warren W. Peters, Methodist Church, Lebanon, Ill.*

"Follow Thou Me!"

ALBERT SCHWEITZER closes his remarkable book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* with this paragraph: "He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!', and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether he be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is."—*Warren W. Peters, Methodist Church, Lebanon, Ill.*

"God's Circle of Compassion"

THE BOOK that the *New York Times* book magazine calls the most remarkable book of 1948, *Cry, The Beloved Country,* is a story of mercy as shown through Christian service. The story takes place in Africa. The land becomes too poor to support the crowded natives and a minister's son goes to Johannesburg to try to make his own way. With evil companions he falls into evil ways and as the father goes down to find him he discovers that his son murdered the son of the white man who lives in the hills beyond his church. Later the minister finds that the father whose son has been killed has in turn become a benefactor of the little church and the people. He builds a dam that stores water and restores fertility to the land. He gives money to build a church. Thus, through God's circle of compassion, the community becomes a place filled with the spirit of good will.—*Frank A. Court, St. Paul Methodist Church, Lincoln, Neb.*

Discouragement Is Dangerous

SOMEWHERE there is a legend to the effect that Satan once called his councilors together. For there was important business at hand. They were to consider how best they could conquer the soul of man; how best they could besiege the inner citadel of man's soul and lay it waste. Various suggestions were made, but still Satan was dissatisfied with their proposed schemes. Finally, one unusually bright-looking imp stood up and said: "I think I have it. We shall send discouragement into the soul of men and then we will conquer them." And we are told that Satan was satisfied and said: "That's it. Now we will conquer man."—*Aaron N. Meckel, First Congregational Church, St. Petersburg, Fla.*

Rootless Lives

IN JAPAN growers have learned the art of raising dwarf trees. All that is necessary is the cutting of the tap root; then the tree must live on the small surface roots. Thus deprived of deeper sustenance, oak, pine and various fruit trees reach a height of only twelve or eighteen inches. In some such way men and women who leave religion out of their lives subsist only by surface roots and cannot become full-rounded persons. They live but they do not grow. The finer things possible to human beings will be lacking. Such people never "attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of God in Christ Jesus."

Evolving Man

DR. LUCCOCK reports that in the British Museum there are the remains of several prehistoric men, all labeled after the place where they were found. One of these is labeled the "Galilee Man." A few bones of this primitive predecessor of the human being were picked up in Galilee, hence the name given these remains. Says Dr. Luccock: "There is a long road that lies between the Galilee Man and the Man of Galilee. A great deal of evolution transpired before the latter could be brought forth. Between these two types of individuals there is an upthrust, an emergent purpose, an evolving plan. The Galilee Man is the type of creature we have evolved from; the Man of Galilee is the type of man toward which we move: verily, the Son of the Most High God."

The Secret of Schweitzer

HERE is the motivating idea behind the missionary service of Albert Schweitzer, scholar, scientist, philosopher, organist, who finds his true life in ministering to the poor and ill of Africa. He gives his reason in his autobiography: "As a student, it struck me as incomprehensible that I should be allowed to have such a happy life while so many around me were wrestling with care and suffering. And one brilliant summer morning it came to me that I must give something in

return for it, and I determined to devote myself to the directly human service, however inconspicuous."

Wisdom from Ruskin

EVEN MORE true now than in the time they were written are the words of the great English critic and humanitarian, John Ruskin: "The great cry that goes up from our manufacturing cities is all in very deed for this, that there we manufacture everything but men. We blanch cotton, we refine sugar, we strengthen steel, we shape pottery, but to strengthen or to refine or to shape a single human soul does not enter into our estimate of advantages."

"What Are Your Orders?"

IT IS an old story but a good one and it needs to be heeded again and again as foreign missions seems to be lagging somewhat in these postwar years. When a minister came to the Duke of Wellington asking him if he thought foreign missions should be carried on, the Iron Duke asked very succinctly but effectively: "What are your orders?" The minister quoted the Great Commission. "What!" exclaimed the Duke, "those are your orders and you discuss carrying them out?" To the great soldier whose first instinct was to obey orders and to have them obeyed, it seemed nothing less than treason to debate the matter.

A Younger Statesman on Missions

NOT ONLY because the world is one today, but because we of the Occident are primarily responsible for the spread of industrialism to Japan, China and India, we must help to build up a nucleus of native church people and through them a public opinion in those nations which can help to bring at the very least the advances in factory and child labor legislation which we have achieved. I am not proposing a destruction of the other great religions, but their inspiration to join and help the Christian church in fighting secularism, nationalism and abuses of industrialism.—*Charles P. Taft.*

Unrealized Possibilities

THE British artist, Rossetti, once told the story of an old man who came into his studio, bringing specimens of his paintings and drawings for the comment of the great painter. Rossetti looked over them sympathetically, but he had to confess that he saw little value in them. However, he managed not to hurt the old man overmuch. Then the man drew from under his coat another set of sketches and spread them before Rossetti, saying that they were the work of a youthful student. The artist saw at once that they revealed remarkable talent and said to his visitor that this young artist would certainly achieve great distinction. Then the old man said, sorrowfully: "Sir, I was that student." Such is the moral tragedy of a life that begins with fine possibilities, but ends with failure or near-failure.

Brief Argument for Missions

WE HAVE no surplus of Christianity in America, but unless we try to bring others to Christ our own Christianity will die on our hands. —*E. Stanley Jones.*

It All Depends

WHEN President Garfield was at the head of Hiram College, in Ohio, a man brought his son as a student and he remarked to the educator that he desired a shorter course than the regular one. "The boy will never take all those courses in," the father said, "but he can take a short course. Can you arrange it?" "Oh, yes," replied the college president, "I can arrange it. Your son can take a shorter course. It all depends on what you want to make out of him. When God wants to make an oak, he takes a hundred years; but when he wants to make a squash, he requires only two months."

The Best News

THE story is told of Alfred Lord Tennyson, famous English poet, that one day, as he was out walking, he happened on a poor old woman whom he greeted with the common question, "What's the news today?" Her reply was that the only news worth telling was that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. "Ah," returned the great poet, "that is old news and new news and good news."—*Donald H. Ogden, Jr., First Presbyterian Church, Staunton, W. Va.*

'One Boy'

HORACE MANN, the famous educator, pleading for the establishment of an eleemosynary institution in his state, was moved to cry: "It would be worth all the money in the treasury of Massachusetts if it would save only one boy." "Are you not making that too strong?" asked an opponent. "No," thundered Horace Mann, "not if it were *my* boy."

Wise Socrates

THE Greek philosopher, Socrates, once said: "Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim: Fellow citizens, why do ye turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth, and take so little care of your children, to whom one day you must relinquish it all?"

VISION

By THOMAS CURTIS CLARK

THE FLAMES of God are in the streets,
The altars of truth have been set up in the market places,
And the sons of men have become the children of God,
And have brought their sacrifices, honest hearts and reverent spirits, to the altars.

The altars of truth have been set up in the market places,
And the sons of men have become the children of God.
They stand with open faces in the streets, before the altars of truth:
Their faces are uncovered, for they are not ashamed of what they have done to other children of God.

The flames of God are in the streets,
The altars of truth have been set up in the market places.

What Shall I Preach?

By FLOYD V. FILSON

WHAT shall I preach and teach? This question is one to which each minister must give prompt and repeated answer. It is an urgent problem to which no pat and easy solution can be found, but it may help us to study briefly three clues which the apostle Paul gives in his letters.

● *'My Gospel,' Says Paul*

At times the apostle speaks of his message as "my Gospel." He offers assurance and gives instruction "according to my Gospel." No one can be so insensitive to the spirit and meaning of Paul as to miss this note of personal testimony. Through all that he writes runs this expression of personal conviction and active participation. We clearly derive from Paul the insight that what we preach and teach must be our own Gospel. I am to preach what I believe and think and support.

This does not mean merely that in intent and content my message must be positive rather than negative, constructive rather than damaging. That is true; with all the preaching of sin, with all the laying bare of the evils of individuals and society, my message is a good word of grace and hope. It is a Gospel, a strong word to give hope and life where they have been lacking and where they are not deserved. This is true; but it is not all.

Nor does "my Gospel" mean only that I am to be honest and say what I personally believe. Sincerity and integrity are indeed as vital to Christian life and teaching as air is to the lungs. We cannot honor God or Christ, we cannot serve the church or our neighbor, nor can we salvage a shred of spiritual health, unless we deeply desire and continuously seek to be honest with our people. It is not easy to be steadily honest; it is hard to want to be thoroughly honest; but before God that is our basic obligation, even when it leads us to confess our sin, and it is only as honest and open Christians that we can offer what each of us can call "my Gospel."

While, therefore, the phrase "my Gospel" implies a positive message and an honest testimony, it means much more. It expresses my free and personal commitment to this message. "My Gospel" is the Gospel to which I am personally committed—gladly and fully committed. It cannot be rumor or hearsay; it cannot be merely an inheritance; least of all can it be a borrowing of another's priceless conviction for our passing professional use. It is "my Gospel." I believe it. I am not important in it but I am committed to it. The hearer must never be permitted to think that I am neutral or lukewarm concerning it. I cannot really preach or teach unless I can sincerely and earnestly say "my Gospel."

● *'That Which I Received'*

In apparent contradiction to this strongly personal note, Paul says to the Corinthians: "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received."

FLOYD V. FILSON

In his preaching he depends upon others, who have told him the story of Christ and the interpretation which faith gives to those events. Furthermore, his voice is joined with that of many who in his time are preaching the same Gospel: "whether I or they, so we preach, and so ye believe." Indeed, he tells the Galatians that no man or angel could preach any other Gospel; there is only one. Thus it is plain that Paul would say to us that we are to preach the one common Gospel which the church has preached and is preaching today.

The Christian preacher and teacher is continually urged to seek fresh and original approaches to his task. He may rightly use apt and new ways of making the message live for those who hear. But there is a pagan egotism which takes delight in variation of content. It takes pride in standing aloof from the common witness of the church. Occasionally one may feel that a Christian leader lacks a sense of comradeship in the brotherhood of Christian testimony. It is imperative, therefore, to underline the fact that none of us is a lone voice. We speak for the church. We present the church's Gospel. The substance of this one faith we have no call or right to change.

This sets a limit on originality, and also on onesidedness. No doubt one aspect of the Christian Gospel will appeal to one man more than another, and it is not evil, but rather natural and good, for each one of us to speak with clear conviction of that which has the deepest significance to us. But monotonous insistence on but one or two aspects of the Gospel is dangerous. It is false to the church's Gospel, and may easily give to the truth we most clearly see a wrong setting and weight. Such monotony does not deal faithfully with the richness of the Gospel or with the varied needs of any Christian congregation or group.

To point to this fact is not to invite dishonest preaching. No minister should assure his people of the truth of that which he holds to be false. But the basic attitude should be that I preach the common Gospel. I speak for the church. I receive and share the one indispensable message and to it I give my witness.

There is much talk today of ecumenics and the ecumenical church. It is important to talk about the ecumenics of preaching. The ecumenical movement has no meaning, but is rather an organizational fraud, unless it is sharing of the one great Gospel, unless it gives us a sense of shared privilege and responsibility, unless we know we speak for the one great church and are active in the brotherhood of Christian witness.

● *'The Gospel of God'*

In all that has thus far been said there have lurked two deadly dangers. "My Gospel" could become the watchword of an egotistic individualism. On the other hand, to deliver "that which I received" could easily lead to mechanical or timid traditionalism.

To avoid this double danger we need to turn with urgent seriousness to the third clue which Paul gives us. He speaks of his preaching as "the Gospel of God." It is a historical account, to be sure; Christian teaching and preaching can never omit that story and remain Christian. That is why Paul often speaks of "the Gospel of Christ." The minister tells the story of what God did in Christ. But the

Gospel tells that story through the eyes of faith. It makes central affirmations concerning things which are not outwardly visible to neutral observers, things not objectively verifiable through ordinary processes of study.

By what right and on what authority do we make these tremendous, astounding affirmations? It would be neither right nor convincing for me to make them on my own authority. Neither can the church as a human fellowship give an adequate confirmation of the eternal truth of what we preach. No; the only solid and sufficient basis for the Christian Gospel is right where Paul found it. He did not receive it from men, nor was he taught. To be sure, he had received tradition, and he had been taught, but that alone did not give him the Gospel. It came to him by revelation, and he had his call "not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead." It came from God. He spoke in words taught by the Spirit.

The Gospel in its essence is not merely external event, nor man's telling and interpretation of that event; it is God's own word to and through the spokesmen whom he calls. It is the Gospel of God.

This is an immense and even staggering claim. But preaching is not just a human enterprise and venture. Nor is truly Christian teaching a self-initiated human exploration of truth. Back of all such preaching and teaching is a word which comes from God.

● *The Task of the Preacher*

Who is sufficient for these things? Karl Barth saw the dilemma and put it in three statements: 1. The preacher's task is to utter the word of God. 2. But the preacher is human, and so can never utter the word of God. 3. Hence the preacher can only agonize at his task, praying that through his witness, through his pointing to a word which he cannot utter, God himself may use the occasion to speak his own word to those who wait in worship.

This is not exactly Paul's way of putting it. But it does what Paul also did. It breaks through the deadly framework of irresponsible individualism and wooden traditionalism, and points clearly to the real source and guarantee of the Gospel.

My Gospel, the church's Gospel, are *the* Gospel only to the degree that they look toward and suggest the Gospel of God, who by his Spirit prompts men to preach and opens the hearts of hearers to respond. Our deepest prayer can only be that we may so speak of Christ that our words give the clue and our hearers find the way to the Gospel of God.

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Ears

A Sermon for Children by J. J. Sessler

A DOG may have the very best ears and hear all that it is supposed to hear, and yet if you strike the lowest key on the piano, it cannot hear the sound. You can hear the low tones but the dog cannot. However, there are some very high tones, much higher than those on the piano, which the dog can hear but you cannot.

Some people have canaries in their homes. The color of their feathers is beautiful and they sing lovely songs. Because they are such beautiful creatures, the owners often talk to them. But they are wasting their time. The canary cannot hear them. The canary can only hear the highest tones that a high soprano singer can reach. But none of us talk in such a high-pitched voice. Therefore, the canary cannot hear us.

Bats can hear sounds so high that we and most other creatures cannot hear them at all. So it is very possible that some animals can make sounds that are so high or can tell each other things on such a high pitch that we cannot hear them.

GRASSHOPPERS AND ANTS

That the grasshopper has its ears in the long hind legs with which it makes those long jumps may sound very strange, but it is true. Their ears, which look like tiny drums, are in the thigh or the upper part of the strong jumping legs. As the grasshopper stands on the ground it can hear sounds near the surface of the earth or even sounds below the ground that we cannot hear at all. The ant, too, does its hearing with its legs, and cannot hear the higher notes on the piano. The ant hears by feeling with its feet, and if you set the ant on some soft cotton or wool it is completely deaf to all sound.

Here is another interesting fact about ears. The cat's ears point toward the front. But it can also turn the ear to the side to catch a sound from that direction. But it cannot turn the ears toward the back like the horse and the rabbit can. Do you know why the rabbit has such long ears? The rabbit spends the day sleeping in the tall grass. It has such long ears so that it can hear the slightest sound and so give it warning and opportunity to run from danger.

There are many more interesting things to be said about ears, but we have heard enough to know that God has made the ears of his creatures very different. And he has made them to hear different things. What some creatures can hear, others cannot hear at all.

CAN WE HEAR GOD?

The animals, the birds and the insects have a way of talking to one another, but we cannot hear them and therefore we do not know what they are saying. But we can hear something that all the other creatures in the world cannot hear. We can hear God speaking to us.

You have seen a good musician leading an orchestra. He has a very fine ear for music. He can hear in music what most of us cannot hear. If there is one sour or flat note coming from the smallest instrument, he hears it at once. He has ears that really hear.

That reminds me of what Jesus said about hearing. He said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." By this he means that God is speaking to us, and also that we can hear him if we only try.

God speaks to us in many ways. He speaks to us when we read the Bible. The animals have no Bible through which to hear God. That means that the rabbit, even if it hears well with its long ears, cannot hear God as we can. We can hear God when we pray alone or when we go to church. The dog and the cat and all the other animals do not pray and therefore they cannot hear God. God speaks to us in nature, in all the wonderful things that he has made—the food growing in the fields, the flowers in our gardens, the trees of our forests and all the other lovely things he has made. In all this we can hear God where the animals cannot hear him.

We can hear God if we will only try. The trouble with most of us is that we do not try hard enough. Therefore Jesus said, "He that has ears to hear let him hear."

A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS

IF WE ARE to try to look into our future, we may begin by reminding ourselves that, although all the other civilizations whose history is known to us may be either dead or dying, a civilization is not like an animal organism condemned by an inexorable destiny to die after traversing a predetermined curve. . . . The swift succession of catastrophic events on a steeply mounting gradient inevitably inspires a dark doubt about our future, and this doubt threatens to undermine our faith and hope at a critical eleventh hour which calls for the utmost exertion of our spiritual faculties. Here is a challenge which we cannot evade, and our destiny depends on our response. What response to this challenge is the Christian going to make?

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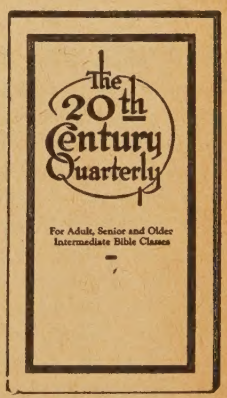

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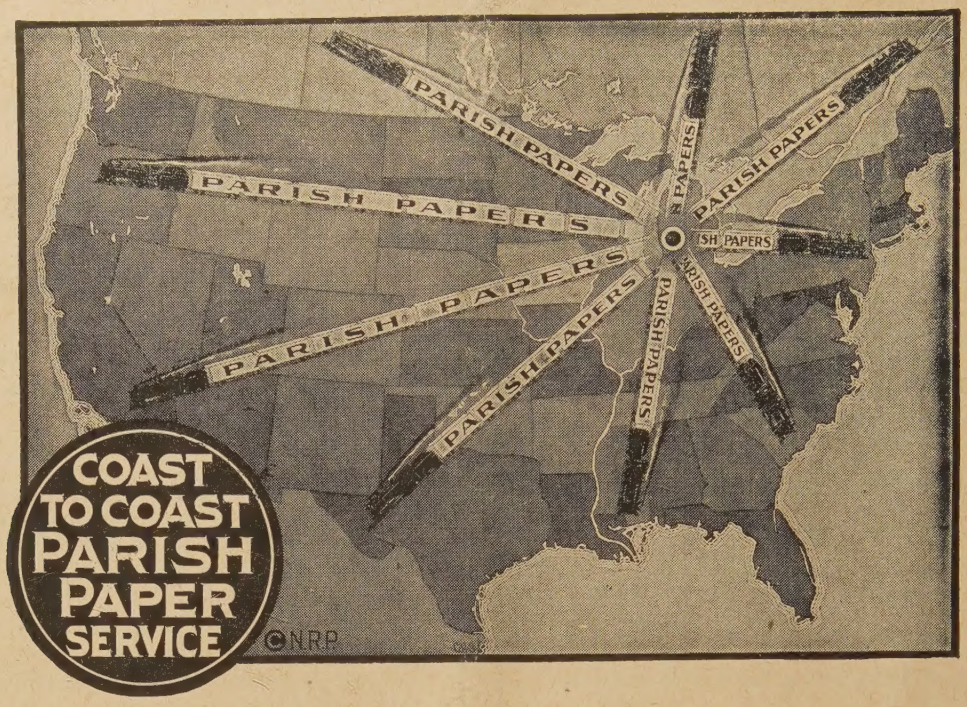

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